

# EXHIBIT 1

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# 'They're shooting to kill, regardless of the target'

Doctors struggle to cope with the victims of Israel's bloody assault on the West Bank in pursuit of 'terrorists'

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**Peter Beaumont**, foreign affairs editor, in Beit Rima  
The Observer, Saturday 27 October 2001 22.50 EDT

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He was at his checkpoint under an olive tree, at the entrance to the West Bank village of Beit Rima, when the Israeli soldiers ambushed and killed him.

Kamal Barghouti was not on any list of terrorists wanted by Israel forces. In all likelihood he was sleeping. They killed him just for being in their way.

Kamal was a handsome 20-year-old before a bullet wrecked his face. An agricultural labourer in need of money, who worked among the olive groves that ring Beit Rima, he had signed on two months earlier as a 'soldier' in the National Security force of the Palestinian Authority, to earn a regular wage.

The work they gave him was a 'beginner soldier's job', said his sister Wafiyeh, speaking a few hours before his burial - one of five victims of last week's brutal Israeli raid on Beit Rima.

They gave him a uniform and a gun - a big deal for a poorly educated young man in the villages of the West Bank. They told him to check the cars that came into the village. That was Kamal's death sentence.

On Tuesday, the night before he died, he had a shower and dinner in the pretty, old stone house his parents own in the village next to the cemetery where he was later to be buried with full military honours.

He spoke then of his fears of being a soldier amid the cycle of retributive violence that has followed the assassination of the racist Israeli Cabinet Minister Rehavam Ze'evi and claimed dozens of Palestinian lives.

'He asked us, "If I die, will you remember me and love me still?"', said his sister tearfully. His family will remember him. But the men who killed him did not even know his name.

They arrived at his checkpoint under the olive tree in a van in the early hours of Wednesday. According to his commander, Colonel Kamal Khadami, the van was packed with a small unit of plainclothes Israeli troops from the elite Dov Dovan - Cherry Brigade - disguised as Palestinians.

They fired without warning, killing Kamal in one of the first bursts. Moments later a second undercover unit attacked Beit Rima's police station.

Taking their cue from their colleagues firing down the road, they burst into the police post shouting 'What's happening?' in Arabic before they too opened fire.

In the gun battle that followed, at least five men - by the Israeli account - were killed. The Palestinians claim up to nine may have died. They say some of the dead are 'missing'.

One thing seems certain. The Palestinian account of a lethal ambush on Beit Rima, launched without warning by a massively superior force equipped with tanks, helicopters and elite combat troops against half a dozen men, is given credence by the stories of the assault troops of the Nahal Brigade who attacked them.

We met them at dusk on Wednesday walking out of the village, two lines of young Israeli soldiers, heavily armed, their faces blacked up for night fighting. Reaching the Israeli checkpoint that blocked the entry of reporters into the village, they hugged and cheered each other.

What had they done, we asked? 'We killed some Arab terrorists,' the young men replied. It was, they told us, an 'easy operation' despite some Israeli injuries. Combat, they added, had been short - resistance light after the first assault by the undercover soldiers. This contradicted the claims of army spokesmen that the 'gunmen' had been killed during 'fierce fighting'.

Was the fighting fierce, we asked? They laughed and shook their heads. It was not fierce, say Palestinians, because some of those who died - like Kamal - were executed as they slept.

This is a view endorsed by Dr Bassem Rimawi, who said he was escorted by Israeli soldiers to inspect some of the dead and wounded five hours after the raid. 'This man was lying right next to his bed under the tree. It was obvious he was shot dead in his bed and fell as he was dying.'

And we had seen one of the 'terrorists' arrested in the operation a few moments before meeting the young soldiers on the road, among another crowd of soldiers who had already come out of the village - older and tougher-looking men, equipped with sniper rifles, night vision goggles and hand-held rockets.

We were instructed not to take any pictures and we watched as a slight man in a striped shirt with hunched and frightened shoulders was led from one of their armoured trucks, his hands bound tightly behind him, a bag over his head. He stood there for a minute, before a sea of khaki bodies crowded round and blocked our view.

The raid on Beit Rima has been portrayed by senior Israeli officials and by politicians as an arrest operation to find the killers of Israel's ultra-right-wing Tourism Minister, assassinated on 17 October by gunmen of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

It is a village, say officers of the intelligence agency Shin Bet, that was 'a viper's nest crawling with major terrorists'. Israel's Defence Minister, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, was even more forthright: 'We are talking about a very large concentration of murderers and very dangerous terrorists. We arrested close to 11 people including the murderer's brother.'

The version of events that is beginning to emerge is bothering some even in the Israeli media. The details of the raid on Beit Rima do not stack up. Indeed, according to Ha'aretz, the raid on Beit Rima was planned two weeks before Ze'evi's killing.

It is true that the flag of the PFLP was flying in Beit Rima on Thursday during the funerals of some of those who died. It is also true that suspected 'terrorists' have families here, among them the mother, brother and sisters of Bilal and Abdullah, whose family name is also Barghouti. Both were active in Hamas, according to their neighbours.

It is also true that the brother of the alleged killer of Ze'evi lived in the village. The brother. Not the killer.

The last issue aside, however, the same could be said of most larger Palestinian villages and towns, radicalised by decades of occupation. All have their men from the PFLP, from Hamas and the Tanzim. There can be few without brothers, mothers or cousins.

Instead, it seems what marked out Beit Rima for last week's military action was what marked it out for attention in the first place - a geographical peculiarity. Surrounded by the huge Israeli settlements around Halamish to the west, it is a village easily cut off at the end of a solitary road.

The suspicion that is emerging is that Beit Rima was selected for no other reason than it was an easy target for Israeli forces to make a lethal demonstration. Next time - the warning is explicit - it will be the Palestinian state, not just a village, which will be the target.

For while the soldiers did not catch Bilal or Abdullah, whose organisation, in any case, has not been linked to Ze'evi's killing - they took some men whose links to Ze'evi's death may be tenuous at least. What they did do was force their way into the homes of three families with links to suspected terrorists. Once in the houses they destroyed them.

Among the houses demolished was that of Bilal and Abdullah's Barghouti's widowed mother, Hana. We found her with her daughters and her neighbours sitting beneath an olive tree outside the collapsed wreckage of her home, one of three demolished by Israeli soldiers.

'They came to the house at 5am,' she told us. 'They ordered us out of our house and brought dogs to search it. They found nothing. They made us sit on the steps for eight hours, while they rested in our house and ate our food. Before they left they blew up my home.'

'I was a rich woman,' she added, close to tears. 'Now I have nothing.'

In nine days of military operations, since Ze'evi's death, against six Palestinian cities - and Beit Rima - Israeli politicians and senior army officers have been crowing over their success. Thirty people have been killed, they claim - 40 by the reckoning of others. The majority of them, they say, were 'terrorists'. Among those 'terrorists' have been at least 16 unarmed civilians - including four women and five children.

And it is not only the dead and injured who are victims. For if it is enough for Hana Barghouti to be punished as a proxy for her Hamas sons, it is sufficient simply to be a Palestinian to share in the punishment for what Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has decreed as the collective guilt for Ze'evi's killing.

The military operations against six Palestinian cities in the past week became a vast reprisal raid against the entire Palestinian people.

In Ramallah and in Bethlehem, in Tulkarm, Jenin, Kalkilya and Beit Rima, it is ordinary civilians who are being given a brutal lesson in the exigencies of the overwhelming nature of Israeli military power and being punished simply for existing.

Last Monday in the El Bireh suburb of Ramallah, the centre of the Palestinian Authority on the West Bank, we watched Israel's soldiers at work.

Tanks and armoured personnel carriers tore up and down the road, intimidating the local population, their crews seizing the keys of drivers foolish enough to go out on the road.

Occasionally a Palestinian gunman would fire a pointless burst of shots from a long distance. In reply Israeli tanks used shells and heavy cannon fire against surrounding buildings.

Ha'aretz's courageous Palestinian affairs correspondent, Amira Hass, who lives in El Bireh, recorded this exchange from an Israeli tank as they met a group of residents examining a broken water pipe by a demolished building.

'Break up this demonstration,' ordered one soldier in the tank. 'Throw a stun grenade,' urged another. They were the same men, I suspect, in the same tank, who made as if to crush The Observer's car beneath their tracks during an interview with a similarly terrified group of local people a little later.

But for all the firing and intimidation in El Bireh, it has been a picnic compared with the violence in Bethlehem, reputed birthplace of Jesus, and one of Christianity's most holy sites.

At Beit Jala hospital on the outskirts of Bethlehem, I met Dr Peter Qumri, the hospital's director. On our first meeting, three days into the fighting, he appeared exhausted, blinking haphazardly with darkened eyes. He said he had been sleeping with his head on his desk. His surgeons had been sleeping on chairs next to the emergency theatre.

Qumri listed the fatalities brought in. They were all killed, he said, by shots to the head, the neck and chest.

'They are shooting to kill,' he said, 'regardless of whether they can identify the target.'

We met again last Wednesday. A lull in the fighting had allowed him to dash to his home a kilometre away to grab a shower and clean clothes. He showed us around the hospital, pointing out the walls where two Israeli tank shells had exploded; a bullet-shattered window on an upper floor.

On this occasion he took us to meet Amjad Balawi, one of his young staff, an anaesthetic technician shot in the leg last week during heavy fighting when, he said, Israeli tanks fired in the direction of the hospital itself.

Balawi was going to the assistance of a patient shot - and killed - by a bullet through the chest the moment he left the hospital compound as Israeli tanks were fighting in the street outside.

He was close to tears as they changed the dressing. The bullet destroyed seven centimetres of bone. He may not have known it yet, but he will be crippled.

'I was walking from the residential block next door,' he says. 'I was wearing my uniform. My white coat. I decided to walk round the front, down the main road, about 50 yards, as there was no firing. I had just come through the main entrance of the hospital when I heard a shot and heard a man shout for help. He had been shot through the chest as I stepped across to help him I felt the bullet hit my leg.'

Balawi was not alone among his staff in being injured.

The previous day a doctor who volunteered to go with a UN ambulance to evacuate the wounded from Ayda refugee camp near Rachel's Tomb also came under what he said was Israeli fire, being shot through a borrowed bullet-proof jacket and wounded in the side.

Qumri took us next to the children's ward. The night before there had been 14 children sleeping in the corridor. But with the fighting so bad, their mothers took them, untreated, back home.

The only children who remained were three suffering from leukaemia. Among them was Rariman Maswadeh and her three-year-old son Mohannand. Rariman had arrived that day with her child for chemotherapy at the only haematology unit in the southern West Bank. Unable to get Israeli health insurance, taking a taxi into a city under fire was her only option.

'I had a choice,' she said. 'I could stay at home in Hebron and my son would miss his treatment or I could risk being shot bringing him here. I had no choice and so I came.' Qumri looked exasperated and I recalled a conversation we had nearly two weeks earlier at our first meeting.

'I don't know what they are doing,' he said then. 'Is it just to punish the people of Bethlehem as a whole? Or do they have something else in mind? Do they want to have Bethlehem back and turn it into part of their metropolitan Jerusalem?'

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